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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the lyrical content of popular music recordings, cited as censored from 1986 through 1995, in order to examine characteristics of the recordings that were found to be objectionable and the frequency with which the objections occurred. Out of 60 articles from the music trade magazines, "Billboard" and "Rolling Stone," 77 instances of censorship were recorded and analyzed. The categories for evaluation were the year of citation, music style, and reason for censorship. Nineteen ninety was the year with the highest number of journal articles (21) covering music censorship. Rap (48%) and rock (44.2%) music accounted for a large portion of the total censored recordings and the majority of recordings were censored because of lyrics seen as explicit, profane, obscene or vulgar. In addition, five rock recordings were censored because of objectionable artwork on or inside the covers. Recordings were also censored because of opposition to a view the artist expressed. Two tables depict the years of citation and the reasons for censorship, each according to music styles. Appendices contain a list of the music censorship articles and a coding form for the year of citation, music style, and reason for censorship. (Contains 20 references.) (AEF)

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CENSORSHIP OF POPULAR MUSIC: AN ANALYSIS OF LYRICAL CONTENT

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the
Kent State University School of Library and Information Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Library Science

by

Kathleen S. Anthony

July, 1995

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ABSTRACT

In order to gain a greater understanding of the current controversy involving popular music recordings, it is necessary to study and compare censorship and popular music of the past. This study analyzes the lyrical content of popular music recordings that have been cited from 1986 through April, 1995 as material censored in the United States. The purpose of the study was to examine characteristics of the recordings that were found to be objectionable and the frequency with which the objections occurred.

Certain recordings are being censored because they belong to a certain genre, such as punk, heavy metal, or gangsta rap. Other findings show censorship of recordings with objectionable artwork, and censorship associated with views of the artist.

While the number of censored rap recordings was just slightly higher than the number of censored rock recordings, rock music is more evenly distributed among the different reasons for censorship. The largest number of recordings, mostly rap music, were censored either because they were labeled "explicit" or because they were profane, obscene, or vulgar in language.

The year with the highest number of cited recordings was 1990, and the majority of these recordings were rock music. In the following years, almost all of the censored recordings were rap music.

In addition to a content analysis of censored popular music, the study provides a discussion of the historical background of music censorship, the campaign to label certain recordings, and the effects of this labeling. Also included in the study is a discussion of the implications of music censorship on librarianship.

Master's Research Paper by

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For over 150 years the censorship of music has occurred regularly and in many forms. As Volz notes: "Librarians cannot perceive this issue as a new one, because specific interest groups have always found certain music to be unacceptable."[1] The controversy continues as the interest groups change through time and the offending music changes with the time. Librarians must be aware of all forms of censorship and be prepared for this controversy to arise regarding the music housed in their libraries and media centers.

An early example in the history of music censorship occurs in the 1850s in the libretto of Giuseppe Verdi's opera La Traviata. This work was one of many that were routinely altered or had portions removed for regional performances in Italy in the mid-nineteenth century. Volz states: "The excised content would typically be politically sensitive or sexually suggestive; whatever material offended those in power at that time was subject to removal."[2]

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[1]Edward J. Volz, "You Can't Play That: A Selective Chronology of Banned Music: 1850-1991," School Library Journal 37 (July 1991): 16

[2]Ibid., 17.

In the 1950s, radio networks and stations commonly used this form of censorship, altering song lyrics or removing lyrics deemed offensive for broadcast. Lyrics which caused controversy were frequently, but not always, about sexuality or drug use. Often the song's meaning was changed considerably and without consulting the song's original lyricist for the revision. In addition, songs were banned outright because of objectionable themes.

A debate in Congress arose over the practice of rewriting lyrics when the radio networks altered the lyrics to Stephen Foster songs, eliminating racist words. A pro-censorship argument, commonly stated today by those who argue against the First Amendment right of free artistic expression, was presented by representative Charles C. Digge (D-MI). He stated that the altering of lyrics was not censorship, but "just a matter of good taste."[3]

The controversial songs of the 1960s and 1970s continued to contain themes of sex, drugs, and politics, but were beginning to be censored in new ways and for different reasons. Station executives would hire bands to re-record (to create "cover" versions of) songs they found too offensive to be broadcast.

Cover versions had already been popular for decades, with white artists recording earlier, well-established black hits. Because white retailers and broadcasters avoided dealing with black ("race") records, this was the only way for black-authored

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[3]Ibid.

songs to reach white record stores and radio stations. Whites often took credit for the black-authored songs that they were re-recording.

Arguments between artists and record labels arose in the mid-1960s over the content of rock songs. Concern over lyrics delayed the release of the Jefferson Airplane 1969 Volunteers album and led to the group eventually forming its own record label.

In 1968, an El Paso, Texas radio station banned all of Bob Dylan's songs because they were indecipherable. Not knowing what their themes were, the station avoided the songs altogether. Cover versions of songs written by Dylan were still broadcast.

Tactics to limit a song's exposure often failed, with the record reaching high sales levels. Some popular releases were banned from airplay when it was feared they would encourage violence. During the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, local radio stations were ordered by Mayor Richard Daley not to play the Rolling Stones song "Street Fighting Man." In 1970, after the killing of four Kent State University students during an anti-war protest, Ohio Governor James Rhodes ordered radio stations to ban the Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young single titled "Ohio" that eulogized the tragedy.

The Beatles single "The Ballad of John and Yoko" was kept off the airways because of lyrical references to Christ and the Crucifixion. The 1971 John Lennon solo release "Working Class Hero" was altered in a variety of ways by radio stations.

An obscenity was either edited out or bleeped over for broadcast.

In March of 1971, the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) warned rock radio stations that broadcasting songs promoting or glorifying the use of drugs could endanger station licenses. No challenges to radio broadcast licenses resulted.

In 1985, the Parents' Music Research Group (later Parents' Music Resource Center or PMRC) was founded in Washington, D.C. by Tipper Gore and Susan Baker. The PMRC campaigned to label rock music records it considered sexually explicit, violent, or drug-related. An agreement was reached with the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) whereby many of the nation's top record companies agreed to police their new releases. A "warning sticker" was to be placed on recordings deemed "explicit," or the record company had the option of printing potentially offensive lyrics on record jackets. The labeling of these materials quickly led to censorship. Some stores would sell stickered music only to those over eighteen, while others refused to sell stickered music at all, because of the possibility of local protests. Some albums were issued in two editions: a version with controversial lyrics that had a warning sticker, and an edited version lacking a sticker. Buyers appeared to prefer their musical releases in the original, unaltered form, as stickered recordings outsold the non-stickered versions.

In 1992, the music trade was hopeful that the election of Bill Clinton as President of the United States would mean a reversal of the increasing government intrusion into matters of

artistic content after twelve years of Republican rule. Less than two months after her husband (Al Gore) entered the White House as vice-president, Tipper Gore resigned from the PMRC. She then turned to pursue mental health and homelessness as her main areas of concern. The PMRC's staff has shrunk from three paid employees to one, and its annual budget, once more than $200,000, is now somewhere between $50,000 and $60,000. The PMRC has been edged out by the religious right, most notably the Reverend Donald E. Wildmon and his American Family Association, the organization that in 1993 ran full-page ads in major newspapers attacking the music, movie, and television industries.

The latest genre to come under fire is "gangsta rap," a stark, confrontational music, with brutal language and frequent celebration of violence and misogyny. In January of 1994, Representative Cardiss Collins (D-Ill.) called for a series of hearings on gangsta rap lyrics and their effect on American youth. Many African American leaders are concerned about the message music is sending to the country's black youth. A similar hearing was called in the Senate by Senator Carol Moseley Braun (D-Ill.) before the Juvenile Justice Sub-Committee. The National Political Congress of Black Women have campaigned against the misogyny of much rap music. Tucker's organization was instrumental in encouraging the anti-rap hearings.

More recently, Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole attacked the entertainment industry, focusing on movies and music. Dole mentioned rock acts such as death metal band Cannibal Corpse and

industrial band Nine Inch Nails, and pinpointed gangsta rap, popularized by Dr. Dre and Snoop Doggy Dogg. Dole also singled out Time Warner Corporation for selling violent rap music. Time Warner is the parent company of Sire, the record label that released "Cop Killer" from rapper Ice-T's metal band Body Count, which resulted in a huge media firestorm in 1993. The song would later be removed from the album Body Count, and Ice-T would be removed from Sire. Time Warner is also home to Interscope, the label which distributes music from Snoop Doggy Dogg, Dr. Dre, and imprisoned rapper 2Pac.

The actions of the PMRC and others bear a similarity to complaints voiced against the rock and roll industry since the mid-1950s. In order to gain a greater understanding of the current controversy involving popular music recordings, it is necessary to study and compare censorship and popular music of the past.

Purpose of the Study

This study analyzes the lyrical content of popular music recordings that have been cited from 1986 through April, 1995 as material censored in the United States. The purpose of the study is to examine characteristics of the recordings that were found to be objectionable and the frequency with which the objections occurred.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Among the literature on censorship of popular music, little is related to analysis and comparison of the objectionable lyrical content.

James R. McDonald examines the history of censorship and rock and roll with an assessment of the position that has been taken by the Parents' Music Resource Center (PMRC).[4] McDonald discusses briefly the scholarship regarding the influence of popular song lyrics on youth and assesses whether that scholarship can or should assist, in any fashion, in the discussions of censorship and rock and roll. The author notes two issues of importance relating to censorship of popular music; the effects of popular song lyrics on their audience and, more important, whether further action is needed to forestall what some consider to be a continuing dangerous influence.

McDonald discusses the formation of the PMRC, its goals and activities, and the events leading to the "voluntary" labeling of records by record companies. The author criticizes the PMRC for identifying itself as a resource center when there does not

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[4]James R. McDonald, "Censoring Rock Lyrics: A Historical Analysis of the Debate," Youth and Society 19, no. 3 (March 1988): 294-313.

exist "any acknowledgement of, citation of, or familiarity with the immense volume of scholarly material that has been produced in colleges and universities throughout the world for the past twenty years."[5] No evidence is offered by PMRC spokespersons to substantiate their contention that certain rock and roll messages aimed at children can be numbered among the factors contributing to ills in our society. McDonald argues that the proposed benefits of labeling, banning, or warning a consumer audience about the supposed inherent dangers of rock music are highly suspect. Often songs rise to the top of sales charts despite banning or censorship efforts.

The PMRC insists that its proposals did not constitute censorship, and that they are not interested in censorship, yet the "voluntary" labeling they argued for was brought forth in the midst of a media blitz in front of the U.S. Congress amid the threat of possible legal action if the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) did not succumb to the PMRC demands.

McDonald summarizes by noting the similarity of PMRC actions to complaints voiced against the rock and roll industry since the mid-1950s. He concludes with the statement: "The history of rock and roll and the issue of censorship is complex and detailed, and a systematic study of its history is essential to any group attempting to influence the consumer."[6]

In another article, McDonald debates the effects of rock

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[5]Ibid., 305.

[6]Ibid., 310.

and roll on audience and whether there is any resultant audience response.[7] The Parents' Music Resource Center (PMRC), PTA, and various other groups have criticized rock music as being detrimental to value formation habits of youth. The author notes a number of studies suggesting that listeners pay little attention to lyrics, focusing instead on the beat or mood of a particular song.

The article also contains a discussion of the disagreement regarding the political nature of rock and roll: whether the music is as political in the eighties as it was during the late sixties, whether the political message of any song is a viable enough message to ensure any resulting sociopolitical action on the part of the listener, and whether the term political, in reference to rock and roll, has a common meaning. McDonald argues, counter to the positions of several recent critical positions, that "rock and roll offers a wide variety of sociopolitical messages and, more important, that the impact of these messages need not necessitate an active sociopolitical response; rather, if the song creates an awareness, a sense of consciousness about the topic addressed within the song, it will have served a useful purpose."[8]

The author summarizes by stating: "By continuing to view rock lyrics as a vehicle that demands a sociopolitical response,

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[7]James R. McDonald, "Politics Revisited: Metatextual Implications of Rock and Roll Criticism," Youth and Society 19, no. 4 (June 1988): 485-504.

[8]Ibid., 485-86.

we continue to place in the hands of rock artists a responsibility that is not warranted."[9]

Volz provides a brief history of music censorship.[10] His article explains the similarities in censorship of music of the 1850s through 1991, the role that radio broadcasting has played in this controversy, and the ways in which threats to the freedom of artistic expression create a chilling effect in the music industry. The author notes the implications of this issue on librarianship and warns that librarians must be prepared for controversy to arise regarding the music in their libraries and media centers. The article also contains a list of four ways for librarians to defuse censorship in their libraries. Volz argues that the stickering of musical recordings, with the resultant limitations on their sale, clearly violates the principle of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution protecting freedom of speech. He states that: "Record companies, with the complicity of radio broadcasters, have for decades consistently limited the freedom of expression of recording artists by capitulating to the demands of censors."[11]

In the thesis entitled "Obscenity and Censorship: When is Something Too Bad to be Heard?" Steven Youngkin discusses the

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[9]Ibid., 501.

[10]Edward J. Volz, "You Can't Play That: A Selective Chronology of Banned Music: 1850-1991," School Library Journal 37 (July 1991): 16-18.

[11]Ibid., 11.

concept of obscenity and the legal history of obscenity laws.[12] He examines the application of obscenity specifically to the music industry by reviewing the "2 Live Crew" decision.

On June 6, 1990, Judge Jose Gonzalez ruled that the album As Nasty As They Wanna Be violated various legal tests for obscenity and was thus obscene. It was the first time a record had ever been ruled obscene. As a result of the ruling, it became a misdemeanor to sell the album to adults in the Florida counties of Broward, Dade, and Palm Beach. Furthermore, it was now a felony to sell the album to minors in any of the above mentioned locales.

Youngkin's study distinguishes that which is obscene in the recording industry from that which is protected under the First Amendment. The study includes an in-depth discussion of the history of censorship and popular music, the PMRC, and record labeling.

Sharon Hochhauser's study of music censorship in the 1980s consists of four chapters: "The History of the PMRC," "The After Effects of the Ratings Proposal," "Music Industry Reactions," and "Alternative Answers."[13] The author argues for the rights of musicians and against the PMRC.

Hochhauser also discusses anti-censorship groups that have

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[12]Steven Youngkin, "Obscenity and Censorship: When is Something Too Bad to be Heard?" (Honors Thesis, Kent State University, 1992).

[13]Sharon Carla Hochhauser, "Music Censorship in the 1980s: Is Rock Music Just Sax and Violins?" (Honors Thesis, Kent State University, 1988).

come about because of the PMRC. The organization called The Musical Majority is made up of recording industry executives, promoters, publishers, publicists, and recording artists. The Musical Majority's sole purpose is to represent the views of all musicians and industry employees, regardless of style or influence. Another group, called The Citizens Against Music Censorship, is made up of music fans and politicians from the Los Angeles area.

The author concludes with suggestions to parents who are concerned with their children's music, noting that "if the PMRC truly wants to help parents, they should shift their emphasis from music censorship to music education."[14]

In the article "Rock Knockers: A Survey of Rock Music Ministries," Don Julien presents the views of those who seek to suppress what is sometimes termed the "Devil's music."[15] The article identifies several major ministries and their activities, set within the context of concern over the influence of rock music on young people.

Rock music ministries focus on rock music's themes of sex, violence, drugs, rebellion and occultism, believing that this music manipulates the audience's attitudes, language and lifestyle. The ministries deliver their message primarily through church-sponsored seminars held for teens or for teens and parents.

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[14]Ibid., 38.

[15]Don Julien, "Rock Knockers: A Survey of Rock Music Ministries," Voice of Youth Advocates 11 (December 1988): 225-28.

Julien lists the publications of these ministries including newsletters, books, and audiocassette recordings of their seminars.

The roots of this type of organized opposition to popular music began in the 1960s with ministries speaking against the "communist influence" of popular music, with a strong focus on the Beatles and folk music.

Julien discusses the position of librarians within the issue of music censorship. He is critical of anti-rock advocates who try to pass off parental responsibility to the music industry, record stores and libraries. The author notes that so far, most censorship activity has been aimed at the music sales industry rather than libraries, probably since libraries spend relatively little on rock recordings. He believes that this suggests another form of censorship and that libraries must provide the widest range of music choices, especially if they hope to provide patrons with a source for evaluating recordings before personal purchase.

A few articles examine the issue of labeling recordings containing possibly objectionable lyrics, what effect this has had on music retailers, and the impact this may have on libraries.

Audrey Eaglen discusses potential problems for libraries that would arise if proposed labeling legislation was passed.[16] Librarians who disseminate materials proscribed under the labeling laws would be criminally liable; a distributor who sold

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[16]Audrey Eaglen, "Strictly off the Records," School Library Journal 36 (July 1990): 33.

labeled discs or cassettes to libraries could also conceivably be liable for prosecution.

Attorney Roger L. Funk stated in an analysis of pending labeling legislation: "Whether or not the proposed laws apply directly to libraries, they would apply to library suppliers and, inevitably, result in labeled works being delivered to libraries."[17] Funk explains the flaws of vagueness and overbreadth in the proposed labeling bills.

The article includes the American Library Association's position. As stated by Funk: "Since the McCarthy era, the American Library Association has opposed all labeling of library materials to identify supposedly 'dangerous' works."[18]

Jason Cohen discusses the most recent attempt to create legislation relating to labeling recordings.[19] House Bill 2982, now pending in Pennsylvania's general assembly, would criminalize the sale of parental-advisory-stickered records to anyone under 18, with punitive measures directed not only at retailers but also at their underage customers. A loose coalition of civil-liberties groups and grass-roots activists like Rock Out Censorship have opposed the bill. According to RIAA assistant general counsel Paul Russinoff, 2982 could cause the record companies to withdraw from the labeling program, since an explicit

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[17]Roger L. Funk, "Legal Analysis: Record Labeling," Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom 39 (May 1990): 77-78.

[18]Ibid., 78.

[19]Jason Cohen, "Bill 2982: No Sale," Rolling Stone 694 (3 November 1994): 32.

but unstickered record would be unaffected by the bill.

In another article, Robert Cutietta discusses the controversy surrounding approval of lyrics from a music teacher's perspective.[20] The author notes that estimates in the recording industry claim that so-called "porn rock" accounts for a miniscule number of the approximately 25,000 songs produced each year. However, many of the objectionable songs are so extreme that they overshadow other, less explicit, recordings. A further problem is that these lyrics are not restricted to obscure groups but are sung by some of the most popular acts in rock and roll.

Cutietta lists and describes problems with album warning labels. These include:

1. Warning labels are not specific enough.
2. Warning labels require value judgments.
3. Warning labels invite misinterpretation.
4. Labels address the symptoms of greater problems, not the problems themselves.
5. Warning labels impose a burden on record companies.[21]

The author also notes two major limitations to the adopted policy that greatly hinder the RIAA-PMRC-PTA agreement's effectiveness. First, the agreement applies only to the thirty-odd members of the RIAA and does not cover imported records. Many of the lyrics quoted by the PMRC and PTA were from imported

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[20]Robert Cutietta, "Rock Music Gets a Label," Music Educators Journal 72, no. 8 (April 1986): 36-38.

[21]Ibid., 37-38.

records. Second, the clause in the agreement that states "where contractually permissible" allows artists with control of their album cover designs to ignore the agreement. Cutietta believes that a better idea would be to make available a copy of the printed lyrics, either as part of the record jacket or on a separate sheet slipped beneath the plastic wrap.

In the article "Presumed Influence" Carolyn Caywood argues that "parental advisory stickers are merely the most common expression of a widespread belief that certain kinds of music can turn an otherwise normal teen into a criminal or psychopath."[22] She opposes the labeling of recordings and believes the underlying presumption is that the teenage listener or viewer cannot think critically about the messages expressed in music and will be hypnotized by them.

Caywood warns that librarians need to be aware of the fears many parents have about teens and their music and that discussion of the library's music collection with parents and teens should not be postponed until there is a complaint. She suggests that "thoughtful selection policies provide for both music that is part of the collective teen identity and music that can foster the development of individual tastes."[23]

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[22]Carolyn Caywood, "Presumed Influence," School Library Journal 39 (June 1993): 44.

[23]Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this study is a content analysis of lyrics of popular music recordings that have been cited from 1986 through April, 1995 as material censored in the United States. The study analyzes the specific lyrical contents or themes that were found to be objectionable.

A search of the database Periodical Abstracts (last updated April 30, 1995) using the search terms "censorship and music" provided a list of 154 article titles, sixty of these from the music trade magazines Billboard and Rolling Stone. These sixty articles (listed in Appendix 1) were examined for citations of particular instances of censorship. All citations of censorship occurring before 1986 were excluded from the study. Seventy-seven particular instances of censorship were recorded and analyzed. The coding form used for analysis can be found in Appendix 2.

Statistical analysis of data has been performed to determine percentages of occurrence of each variable within the following categories: year of citation, music style, and reason for censorship. The criteria for evaluation were determined by the literature search and the articles citing censorship of specific recordings.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

A content analysis was performed on seventy-seven popular music recordings that have been cited as censored material in articles from Billboard and Rolling Stone magazines. The study analyzes the specific lyrical contents or themes that were found to be objectionable. The categories for evaluation are year of citation, music style, and reason for censorship.

The purpose of the content analysis was to examine characteristics of the recordings that were found to be objectionable and the frequency with which the objections occurred.

Year of Citation

Of the 60 Billboard and Rolling Stone articles examined, 27 (45%) contained citations of material censored in the United States. Thirty-three articles (55%) discussed censorship issues either without mention of particular instances of censorship, with duplication of instances already recorded, or with the censorship occurring outside the United States.

The highest percentage of the 60 articles covering music censorship came from the year 1990 when 21 articles (35%) were published. Only 7 (12%) of the articles were from 1994, and as of April 30, 1995, no articles were listed for the year 1995.

The year with the highest number of cited recordings (22) was 1990. These accounted for 28.6% of the 77 total citations. The years 1992 and 1994 followed with 16 and 12 citations (20.8% and 15.5%) respectively. The articles from the years 1987, 1991, and 1995 did not cite any particular instances of censorship (see table 1). Forty-three (56%) of the 77 citations were from Billboard and 34 (44%) were from Rolling Stone.

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF YEAR OF CITATION AND MUSIC STYLE

Year	Country		Pop		Rap		Rock		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1986	0	0	1	1.3	0	0	6	7.8	7	9.1
1987	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1988	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	11.7	9	11.7
1989	0	0	1	1.3	1	1.3	4	5.2	6	7.8
1990	1	1.3	2	2.6	6	7.8	13	16.9	22	28.6
1991	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1992	0	0	0	0	16	20.8	0	0	16	20.8
1993	0	0	0	0	4	5.2	1	1.3	5	6.5
1994	0	0	1	1.3	10	12.9	1	1.3	12	15.5
1995	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1	1.3	5	6.5	37	48	34	44.2	77	100

Music Style

Rap and rock music accounted for a large portion of the total censored recordings. Thirty-seven rap recordings (48%) and 34 rock recordings (44.2%) were cited as censored material. Pop music was cited just 5 times (6.5%) and country music only once (1.3%). In the years with the highest number of particular instances of censorship, 1990 and 1992, rock music accounted for a majority (59%) of the cited recordings in 1990, and rap music accounted for all of them in 1992 (see table 1). These findings correspond with the list of fifty-five "Releases With Consumer Information" made available by the PMRC in 1990. Of those, twenty-three are rap titles, twenty-one are heavy metal (rock), five are pop, and the remainder are difficult to classify.

Reason for Censorship

The largest number of recordings were censored either because they were labeled "explicit" or because they were profane, obscene, or vulgar in language. Each of these categories contained 17 recordings or 22% of the total (see table 2). Most of the recordings in each of these groups were rap music. Rock music is more evenly distributed among the different reasons for censorship.

Certain rock recordings were censored when a Catholic university's radio station banned all heavy metal music. The genre's possible influence in the suicide of a New Jersey teenager was cited as the reason that heavy metal music would no longer be aired. The music was thought to have adverse effects on youths.

TABLE 2

DISTRIBUTION OF REASON FOR CENSORSHIP AND MUSIC STYLE

Reason for Censorship	Country		Pop		Rap		Rock		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Sexually explicit	0	0	2	2.6	3	3.9	0	0	5	6.5
Violent or violence-inciting	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1.3	1	1.3
Drug or alcohol-related	0	0	0	0	1	1.3	1	1.3	2	2.6
Explicit depiction	0	0	0	0	2	2.6	4	5.2	6	7.8
Profane, obscene, or vulgar	0	0	1	1.3	14	18.2	2	2.6	17	22.1
Labeled "explicit"	0	0	0	0	15	19.5	2	2.6	17	22.1
Suicide-related	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2.6	2	2.6
Satanic or occult-related	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1.3	1	1.3
Specific genre	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	10.3	8	10.3
Derogatory or hostile	0	0	0	0	2	2.6	3	3.9	5	6.5
Blasphemous	0	0	1	1.3	0	0	0	0	1	1.3
Not family-oriented	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	6.5	5	6.5
Opposition to view of artist	1	1.3	1	1.3	0	0	0	0	2	2.6
Objectionable artwork	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	6.5	5	6.5

Sometimes a recording is found to be objectionable because of the accompanying artwork. Five rock recordings have been censored because of the artwork included either on the outside or inside of their covers.

Recordings have also been censored because of opposition to a view the artist holds. The music of country artist k.d. lang was banned from a radio station in Nebraska's cattle region because the singer, a member of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, had been extolling the virtues of a meat-free diet. Several other stations in the meat belt joined in the ban on lang. The motivation for this ban seemed to be simply for publicity rather than because of the views of lang, and may actually be an example of censoring for promotional purposes. After Yusef Islam, once known as Cat Stevens, endorsed the Ayatollah Khomeini's call for the execution of Satanic Verses author Salman Rushdie, radio stations around the U.S. dropped Stevens from their playlists.

When the Wal-Mart department-store chain stopped carrying records by a number of rock acts they declined to elaborate on the reason, stating only that the decisions on merchandise are based on what Wal-Mart wants to sell and what Wal-Mart believes is the family image. The censored recordings were not family-oriented.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

With the formation of the PMRC in 1985 and implementation of "voluntary" labeling of records by record companies, censorship followed and the music censorship controversy grew. This study indicates that the controversy concerning censorship of music has continued through the years 1986 to 1995 and shows no signs of waning. Though the actions of the PMRC and others bear a similarity to complaints voiced against the rock and roll industry since the mid-1950s, the interest groups continue to change as well as the offending music. This can be seen in even the relatively short time span that has been studied.

In the agreement between the PMRC and the members of the Recording Industry Association of America, RIAA members agreed to sticker albums that contained references to suicide, violence, drugs, sex, and alcohol. The controversy over explicit lyrics in music has expanded beyond these topics to others, including homophobia, racism, bigotry, violence toward women, and Satanism. Some record companies have considered affixing warning stickers to products with lyrics that might be considered offensive or otherwise controversial by certain ethnic, sexual, or racial groups. Additionally, some companies say they either have asked or would ask artists to change lyrics in such cases.

This study has revealed the fact that certain recordings are being censored because they belong to a certain genre, such as punk, heavy metal, or gangsta rap. These genres were thought to have adverse effects on youths. Other findings show censorship of recordings with objectionable artwork and censorship associated with views of the artist.

While the number of censored rap recordings was just slightly higher than the number of censored rock recordings, rock music is more evenly distributed among the different reasons for censorship. The largest number of recordings, mostly rap music, were censored either because they were labeled "explicit" or because they were profane, obscene, or vulgar in language.

The year with the highest number of cited recordings was 1990, and the majority of these recordings were rock music. In the following years, almost all of the censored recordings were rap music.

Though the interest groups and offending music have changed through time, the censorship of music continues to occur regularly in many forms. This controversy is sure to continue.

APPENDIX 1

LIST OF MUSIC CENSORSHIP ARTICLES

Adler, Bill, and Howard Bloom. "Anti-Rock Censors Must Be Stopped." Billboard 101, no. 35 (2 September 1989): 9.

Baker, Susan, and Tipper Gore. "Record Industry Misunderstands PMRC." Billboard 101, no. 6 (11 February 1989): 9.

Benesch, Connie. "Rap: The Good, the Bad, and the Censored." Billboard 106, no. 48 (26 November 1994): 42-44.

Berman, Jason S. "Censorship Must Be Opposed." Billboard 102, no. 27 (7 July 1990): 11.

Bloom, Howard. "It's Time to Campaign against Censorship." Billboard 101, no. 3 (21 January 1989): 13.

Borzillo, Carrie. "KACE Clears Air of 'Negative' Songs." Billboard 105, no. 44 (30 October 1993): 78.

Bronson, Fred. "A Selected Chronology of Musical Controversy." Billboard 106, no. 13 (26 March 1994): N36.

Broyde, Sharon. "Metal Ban at Catholic WSOU Still an Exception." Billboard 100, no. 25 (18 June 1988): 10.

Christman, Ed. "Heat's on Stores to Rethink Sales of Gangsta Rap." Billboard 106, no. 3 (15 January 1994): 1.

_____. "It's a Stick(er)y Situation at NARM." Billboard 102, no. 11 (17 March 1990): 1.

_____. "Stickered Stock: Retail's Reaction to Increased Responsibility." Billboard 106, no. 13 (26 March 1994): N34-N36.

Crawford, Peter. "Free Speech Threatened." Billboard 101, no. 44 (4 November 1989): 11.

DeCurtis, Anthony. "Opinion." Rolling Stone 639 (17 September 1992): 32.

DeCurtis, Anthony. "Record Companies Finesse PMRC." Rolling Stone 473 (8 May 1986): 16.

_____. "Study Refutes PMRC Claims, Says Kids Don't Listen to Lyrics." Rolling Stone 480 (14 August 1986): 11.

DiMartino, Dave, and Thom Duffy. "Music Bigwigs in Labeling Powwow." Billboard 102, no. 9 (3 March 1990): 8.

Duffy, Thom, and Ken Terry. "Censorship Concerns Spark 1990's New Music Seminar." Billboard 102, no. 30 (28 July 1990): 1.

Duffy, Thom, Trudi Miller, Phyllis Stark, and Paul Verna, eds. "CMJ Implores College Radio to Uphold Free Expression." Billboard 102, no. 45 (10 November 1990): 12.

Dunn, Jancee. "Wal-Mart: No 'Utero'." Rolling Stone 669 (11 November 1993): 13.

Flanagan, Bill. "Radio Moo-ves to Ban Anti-Beef lang Are Un-American." Billboard 102, no. 30 (28 July 1990): 9.

Gilmore, Mikal. "The Year in Music." Rolling Stone 593-594 (13 December 1990): 13.

Glusman, John A. "Jazz Leaders Face Trial in Czechoslovakia." Rolling Stone 497 (9 April 1987): 16.

Goldberg, Michael. "Wal-Mart Bans LPs." Rolling Stone 482 (11 September 1986): 15.

Goldberg, Michael, and Jeffrey Ressner. "Retailers Take on Stickering." Rolling Stone 576 (19 April 1990): 26.

Gowen, Anne. "Tipper Gore Quits PMRC." Rolling Stone 654 (15 April 1993): 20.

Greene, Michael. "Industry Must Fight against Censorship." Billboard 104, no. 41 (10 October 1992): 4.

_____. "Why Are These People Laughing?" Billboard 100, no. 38 (17 September 1988): 9.

Haring, Bruce. "Lyrics Concerns Escalate." Billboard 101, no. 45 (11 November 1989): 1.

_____. "Official Boots Metal from Univ. Radio." Billboard 100, no. 20 (14 May 1988): 85.

Haring, Bruce, Thom Duffy, Larry Flick, and Chris Morris, eds. "Industry Leaders Stand up for Crew." Billboard 102, no. 27 (7 July 1990): 6.

Holland, Bill. "50,000 Sign on the Anti-Censorship Dotted Line." Billboard 101, no. 40 (7 October 1989): 96.

_____. "Ariz. Labeling Bill Reaches State Assembly." Billboard 102, no. 11 (17 March 1990): 5.

_____. "Congress Can Regulate Lyrics, '87 Study Says." Billboard 101, no. 23 (10 June 1989): 1.

_____. "In D.C.: Visa-vis, User Fee, NEA Plea." Billboard 103, no. 40 (5 October 1991): 15.

_____. "PMRC Urges Label Heads to Take Bloom to Task." Billboard 100, no. 5 (30 January 1988): 6.

_____. "Trade Cheered by Clinton's Victory." Billboard 104, no. 46 (14 November 1992): 1.

Husney, Owen. "Hardcore Rappers Are Voice of the Underclass." Billboard 104, no. 26 (27 June 1992): 6.

Lannert, John. "Crew Celebrates Victory, but the War Continues." Billboard 102, no. 44 (3 November 1990): 1.

Levin, Mike. "China Drops Quotas on Foreign Music." Billboard 106, no. 41 (8 October 1994): 6.

Lichtman, Irv. "Editorial: Grass-Roots Support Needed in Labeling Fight." Billboard 102, no. 11 (17 March 1990): 11.

Light, Alan. "Ice-T." Rolling Stone 641 (15 October 1992): 162-64.

_____. "Words from the 'Home' Front." Rolling Stone 657 (27 May 1993): 20-21.

McCormick, Moira. "Ex-Chicago Teacher Forms 'Parents for Rock and Rap'." Billboard 102, no. 34 (25 August 1990): 8.

Miller, John. "South African Concert Canceled." Billboard 101, no. 14 (8 April 1989): 68-69.

_____. "South Africa's Shifty Label Hit with Government Bans." Billboard 101, no. 25 (24 June 1989): 79.

Morris, Chris. "'Erotic Music' Battle Returns to Wash. State." Billboard 105, no. 12 (20 March 1993): 12.

Morris, Chris. "Guns N' Roses 'Undercover' Artwork Triggers New Controversy." Billboard 100, no. 45 (5 November 1988): 80.

_____. "Jane's Addiction Has a Habit of Sparking Album-Art Furors." Billboard 102, no. 34 (25 August 1990): 31-32.

_____. "...While Its Home State Passes 'Adult Music' Bill." Billboard 106, no. 13 (26 March 1994): 12.

Neely, Kim. "Louisiana Law to Require LP Stickers." Rolling Stone 585 (23 August 1990): 35.

_____. "Record-Chain Blacklist." Rolling Stone 637 (20 August 1992): 18.

_____. "Rockers Sound Off." Rolling Stone 584 (9 August 1990): 27.

Rosen, Craig. "Geffen Refuses to Distribute Geto Boys Album." Billboard 102, no. 34 (25 August 1990): 1.

Sandow, Gregory. "Doctors Deny PMRC Alliance." Rolling Stone 572 (22 February 1990): 34.

Soocher, Stan. "2 Live Crew: Taking the Rap." Rolling Stone 584 (9 August 1990): 19.

Stark, Phyllis, Barbara Davies, Melinda Newman, and Ed Christman, eds. "Politics of Music Biz in Focus at CMJ." Billboard 104, no. 46 (14 November 1992): 10.

Tannenbaum, Rob. "Church Assails Heavy Metal." Rolling Stone 576 (19 April 1990): 32.

Terry, Ken. "Bloom Adds to Campaign against PMRC Influence." Billboard 100, no. 9 (27 February 1988): 90.

Verna, Paul. "N.W.A. Disk Is a No-Go at WaxWorks Web." Billboard 102, no. 37 (15 September 1990): 5.

Weisel, Al. "Freedom Rock." Rolling Stone 693 (20 October 1994): 50.

APPENDIX 2

CODING FORM

Title Number

Year of Citation
1 1986
2 1987
3 1988
4 1989
5 1990
6 1991
7 1992
8 1993
9 1994
10 1995

Music Style
1 country
2 pop
3 rap
4 rock

Reason for Censorship
1 sexually explicit
2 violent or violence-inciting
3 drug or alcohol-related
4 explicitly depicts sexual acts, drug abuse, and/or violence (includes more than one of these)
5 profane, obscene, or vulgar in language
6 labeled "explicit"
7 suicide-related
8 satanic or occult-related
9 included in a specific genre thought to have adverse effects on youths (e.g., punk, heavy metal, gangsta rap)
10 derogatory or hostile toward a certain group
11 blasphemous
12 not family-oriented
13 opposition to a view the artist holds
14 objectionable artwork included with recording

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